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ABSTRACT

Information on an atypical 1966-67 Distributive Education pilot program in New Mexico was given. The program was unique since one instructor conducted this program in two schools which were in separate rural districts (Dexter and Hagerman). Since both communities were primarily agricultural, with small student populations, the cost of such a program was prohibitive for either district. Objectives were to establish a program in the two schools that was sufficiently flexible to meet students' needs, and to develop a distributive education curriculum. The project was financed through local schools and the Vocational Education Division, State Department of Education. A preliminary survey indicated that students who were previously identified as potential dropouts, and who enrolled in the program, were still in school. It was felt by the distributive education teacher and the school administration that this program was increasing the holding power of small schools.
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DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION IN SMALL RURAL SCHOOLS
1966-1967

INTRODUCTION

The following is a report on a non-typical Distributive Education pilot program. The program is atypical in the fact that one instructor conducts a Distributive Education Program in two schools which are in separate rural school districts. These two high schools are located in small school districts that would have difficulty providing enough students for a Distributive Education program. Also, the cost of a Distributive Education teacher and his program was prohibitive for either school district when per student cost was considered.

The administrators in these two small districts were farsighted enough to seek distributive training for their students. Factors in the community, which will be explained later in the report, precipitated the need for a Distributive Education program.

The Distributive Education program and curriculum were designed to meet and fit the needs of these two rural communities. Training stations were established in various areas, i.e., groceries, feedlots, service stations, etc., to serve the students in the area.



One student is receiving on-the-job training as a butcher in a local grocery.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Dexter and Hagerman communities are located in the Roswell-Artesian Basin, the Pecos Valley Area of southeastern New Mexico. These agricultural communities are dependent upon water from deep Artesian wells and the Great Northern Canal System. The soil is fertile and highly productive with the major crops being alfalfa, cotton, and feed crops. Due to the climate and availability of feed, the cattle-feeding industry has developed into a major agricultural commodity of the area.

In the past, these communities have worked together in sharing a school nurse. The location of most fraternal organizations is located in one town and, also, it is uncommon to duplicate a business in either town.

One problem of the two communities is their geographic location between Roswell and Artesia (approximately 40 miles apart). The area has been losing population due, in part, to the increased technology used in farming. Large farming complexes have developed in the area. Also, the business communities in the area have been badly hurt due, in part, to the rapid transportation provided by the automobile. In a short amount of time a customer can shop in Roswell, the second largest city in New Mexico.

With the agrarian nature of the community, two classes of people have developed. One, the property owners, whose children usually attend college or take over the family business. The second group of citizens are employed by the first group or on marginal farms. The youth of this group usually do not go to college and most of its young people are forced to leave the community to seek employment.

DEXTER--ITS SCHOOLS

The school population of the Dexter schools consists of approximately 450 students in the elementary grades and 300 students at the high school level. This small number of students limits the number of students eligible to participate in Distributive Education.

Under the direction of Superintendent E. P. Messick, students are housed in modern, well-equipped buildings. Vocational courses offered at Dexter High School include Auto Mechanics, General Shop, Vocational Office Education, and Home Economics. The school is supported by a town of 1,100 people and a surrounding agricultural population of approximately 3,500.

HAGERMAN--ITS SCHOOLS

The Hagerman Public Schools has a student population of less than 600 students. Students eligible for Distributive Education (Juniors and Seniors) number less than 60 per year. Vocational courses offered at Hagerman High School are Vocational Agriculture, Home Economics, and Office Education.

The school system, under the direction of Superintendent R. A. Welborne, serves a population of 1,350 people in Hagerman with a surrounding rural population of approximately 2,600. Students are housed in modern, adequately equipped buildings.

ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT

The Distributive Education Program in the Dexter and Hagerman Public Schools was initiated as a pilot project with the following included in the planning phase: Dr. M. G. Hunt, Director of Vocational Education in New Mexico, Mr. Ralph Gleckler, State Supervisor of Distributive Education, Mr. R. A. Welborne, Superintendent of Dexter public schools, Mr. E. P. Messick, Superintendent of Hagerman public schools, and Mr. Jack Hubbard, the local Distributive Education Coordinator.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the project were:

1. To establish a distributive education program in Dexter and in Hagerman public schools.
2. To establish a program with sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of the students.
3. To develop a distributive education curriculum that includes:
 - a. A study of the potentials of distributive and other occupational fields as potential careers.
 - b. Vocational testing in conjunction with the New Mexico Employment Security Commission.
 - c. Vocational guidance.
 - d. In-school instruction in the world of work.
 - e. On-the-job training and instruction.
 - f. Field trips, distributive in nature.
 - g. The development of subject matter by project procedure.
 - h. Eleven months of coordination.

These objectives have all been met with varying degrees of success; some will be discussed later in this report.

STUDENTS IN THE DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

The students served by the Distributive Education Program are for the most part students who are not college-bound and who would conceivably have to leave the community to seek employment. Approximately one-third of the students in the two schools indicate they will attend college. Commonly those students are in the lower economic strata of the community. Many of the students in the program have had little opportunity to travel or observe business in a metropolitan area. This may be due, in part, to the economic strata of the community and the sparse population of New Mexico. For these students the field trip gives them an idea of the business world outside their community.

SCHEDULING

Class schedules in each school were arranged so the Distributive Education coordinator could teach two classes in each school. The distance between the two schools is approximately 8 miles. Therefore, travel time of the instructor is kept to a minimum. The classes are conducted in the mornings, and most of the afternoon is available for the supervision of students on the job.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

This project is financed through the local schools and the Vocational Education Division of the State Department of Education. Each school provides a proportional amount and furnishes the space and supplies for the project. State and Federal funds from the Vocational Division of the State Department of Education make up the balance of the budget, which includes the instructors salary. Some Vocational Work Study funds are used to employ Distributive Education students in the local schools.

FACILITIES

The Dexter Public Schools have provided the Distributive Education teacher with a vacant teacher's cottage for a classroom and work area. This has many advantages over a standard classroom in working with small groups of students. The Hagerman Public Schools furnished a classroom separate from the main building for the Distributive Education program which makes a more than adequate Distributive Education classroom. These classrooms, separate from main buildings, are especially convenient for after school meetings, and Distributive Education club meetings or projects.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Two special projects have been included in the Distributive Education program. In cooperation with the Lions Club, the students have participated in a toy-Christmas-basket drive and a broom sale. Time was donated by the students as a community help program.



Mr. Ralph Gieckler, State Distributive Education Supervisor, works with the local coordinator on this pilot project.



Various classroom projects such as the scale model window displays were utilized in the project.

FIELD TRIPS

At the time of this publication, two major field trips have been completed. On a trip to Amarillo, Texas, the students toured the Southwestern Drug Plant, Rhodes Cafeteria, the Sears store, and the newspaper. On the second trip to El Paso, Texas, the students visited the Continental Oil Company, El Paso Natural Gas, Bassett Shopping Center, and had a Greyhound tour of Juarez, Mexico. On the return trip, visits were made to New Mexico State University, White Sands Proving Grounds and White Sands National Park. Various local trips to such places as the local office of the New Mexico State Employment Service, the Southwestern Public Service Company, General Telephone Company, and etc., were planned and conducted in the course of the year. These trips were discussed in class, both before and after the trip, and students were asked to observe certain points discussed in class. It was surprising to the writer that when the question was asked how many students had been to the cities on the two trips, very few students had been before the school sponsored the trips.

The field trips were conceived and developed to give the students an understanding of the job opportunities, types of business establishments, difference between business interest in one area as compared to business in another area. These trips have covered a large spectrum of Distributive enterprise while covering three states and two nations.

EVALUATION

An evaluation of a demonstration project of this kind is difficult in terms of definite goals achieved. When a subjective evaluation is attempted various things come to light.

First, many of the students were enrolled in the Distributive Education class because they were potential troublemakers and/or dropouts in the school. This was only a minority of the Distributive Education students, but it was felt that the Distributive Education program could do more to help these students than other classes offered in the schools. As a whole, the class is very near average.

A preliminary survey was conducted by the administration at mid-term on the students who had previously been identified as potential dropouts. It was found that all of the students previously identified as dropouts, and who were enrolled in the Distributive Education program, were still in school. It was also noticed that the average grades and the daily attendance had improved from previous years. The largest difference noticed by teachers and administrators was the improvement in attitude toward teachers, administrators, and peers.

Because of the rural setting, very few students work at training stations that can be classified as being totally in the Distributive area. Many of the students work stations are located in an agricultural business, i.e., cotton gin, feed lots, land leveling service, etc.

Even though these jobs are integrally related to agriculture, the Distributive aspects are stressed both in the classroom and in on-the-job discussions. For example, the cotton cooperative where one student works offers many buying services, deals in the cotton market, advertises widely and buys and sells in the cotton futures market.

Because of the rural setting, the pilot project cannot be classified as a pure Distributive Education program. Although it is not a true Distributive Education program, it is felt that the flexibility of Distributive Education has enabled the program to be developed to meet many of the needs of the rural students participating in the program.

It was felt by the teacher and the administration that this program is increasing the holding power of the small schools participating. Also, the administration and the state supervisor of Distributive Education believe that the program is meeting the objectives as set forth at the start of the project.



Mr. Jack Hubbard, the Distributive Education Coordinator, keeps the current work records on all students.